

Iraqis in Jordan scrape to make a living

By Steve Brannon
Special to The Star

AS UM Ahmed pauses to reflect on the changes in her life since 1991, a look of tired resignation settles on her face. After her husband disappeared in Kuwait sometime in 1991, her comfortable middle-class life in Baghdad began to be whittled away by crippling UN sanctions imposed on Iraq.

Like most Iraqis, Um Ahmed and her family learned to get by with less, sometimes selling their valuables to buy food while hoping for better days to come. That was until the fall of 1994, when Um Ahmed and several of her family decided to leave Iraq for Jordan, hoping eventually to settle in a western country. They are still waiting.

By virtue of its geographical and historical ties with Palestine, Jordan has traditionally served as a haven for Palestinian refugees and displaced persons. Jordan was the final destination point for most of these and, in fact, Jordanians of Palestinian origin are usually estimated to constitute somewhere between 50 and 70 percent of the Jordanian population.

Unlike the Palestinians who came to Jordan and remained there, the vast majority of Iraqi refugees are using Jordan as a transit point from which they hope to get visas and then resettle permanently in western countries. Many already have relatives living in the West who help to support them here in Jordan while they wait. Khadija, a 28-year-old Iraqi woman, has been in Jordan since October 1994, waiting with her brother and sister to join the rest of their family in the United States. While they wait, all three work illegally at low-paying jobs and receive some support from their

relatives in America. Khadija earns JD 50 per month. Um Ahmed, who looks to be in her fifties, and Farida, who is 33, both work "under the table" as housekeepers.

There is, of course, a difference between political and economic refugees. The former are defined by the United High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) as "any person who has a well-founded fear of persecution because of his or her religion, ethnic origin, nationality, political opinion or social group." UNHCR provides political refugees with monthly assistance, education and medicine, and in the case of Iraqi political refugees, helps them to be resettled away from Jordan in a third country. In short, political refugees are considered "real" refugees and are treated well, whereas economic refugees fleeing poverty receive no assistance and are subtly discouraged by the Jordanian government. Although the Iraqi regime has also produced numerous political refugees, most Iraqis in Jordan are here because of the crushing poverty inflicted by UN sanctions.

In a country where the UN estimated that 4,500 children were dying each month due to lack of food, one might expect a flood of Iraqis to be streaming out of the country for a chance at a better life. However, several factors work to keep the number of "economic refugees" lower than one might ordinarily expect. Perhaps fearing a "brain drain" of its best and brightest, the Iraqi government has set the exit fee for Iraqis at 400,000 Iraqi dinars (\$330,400), which is too high for most Iraqis to pay.

While Jordan never closed its border to Iraq, and has been by far the easiest destination for Iraqis wishing to leave, the Kingdom also has reasons for limiting the size of its Iraqi refugee population. A large influx of refugees would place addi-

tional stress on an already moribund Jordanian economy, and could harm political relations between Jordan and Iraq.

Of course, these reasons don't mean much to Farida, whose two children have not attended school during the three years since they came to Jordan. It is illegal for them to go to a public school, and she cannot afford to send them to a private one. Likewise, most Iraqis in Jordan keep a sharp eye out for the Ministry of Labour, as the majority are working illegally if at all. Their illegal status means they are forced to work for lower wages at menial jobs, ranging from housekeeping to selling cigarettes and other merchandise on street corners.

One policy designed to discourage visitors overstaying their welcome in Jordan may in fact have the opposite effect. Any Iraqi without a residency permit who stays past their allotted two week entry period must pay a fine of JD for each day they have remained illegally, before they leave Jordan. As many of the Iraqis in Jordan are already on the poverty line and cannot afford the fine, they opt to stay, hoping for an amnesty.

According to several Iraqis I talked with, the Jordanian government does offer an amnesty of sorts, allowing them to leave without paying the fine on the condition that they are never allowed to return to Jordan again. This option is a difficult one for Iraqis here to agree to, however, as many are waiting in Jordan for their immigration papers to resettle in another country. To return to Iraq would mean giving up this dream at least in the short to medium term.

Several aspects surprised me during my discussions with Iraqis in Jordan. First of all, I expected to find some sort of communal spirit or fraternal ties among the Iraqi



Iraqi women make a living by selling bric-a-brac in downtown Amman

refugees, when in fact most of the people I talked to were not in touch with other Iraqis in Jordan beyond their immediate family, neighbors and one or two other friends. The Iraqis I talked with attributed this to the idea that even though they were all Iraqis in Jordan, they had little else in common.

I was also surprised by the depth of their despair for the future of their country. Every one that I talked with said that even though life is difficult for them in Jordan, it is better here than in Iraq. Khadija articulated her despair by asking "Have you ever in your life seen a nation so rich and high fall so far?" When asked whether or not they expected to ever return to Iraq, every single one replied "no," sometimes

with tears welling in their eyes. Those who felt comfortable enough to even approach a political discussion let me know in no uncertain terms that the Iraqi regime is growing stronger and is here to stay.

The life of an illegal refugee can be greatly complicated by a careless word, so discretion is highly valued by Iraqi refugees in Jordan. For many, Jordan is so close to Iraq that they still fear the long arm of the Iraqi intelligence agencies. On a more mundane level, they stay on the alert for the Jordanian Ministry of Labour and the Ministry of the Interior. The names found in this article are therefore aliases, in order to protect those who agreed to talk with me.

Clouds hover over political landscape

Continued from page 1

Opposition parties fear that their turn is next. The leftist People's Democratic Party (PDP) has been battling the government in court since last year on charges of links to outside organizations.

"There are many areas of friction between the government and civic institutions and the government is preparing to strike legally at us. The beginning was our party, and then the rest of organizations," Mr. Nahas, who also heads the PDP, said.

Minister of Interior Naeef Rasbid has warned political parties to submit their annual budgets without delay or face legal repercussions. Opposition parties, particularly the so-called historical opposition which includes the leftists and pan-Arabist parties, have been accused by successive governments of maintaining links with outside parties.

"The government knows what is going to happen and they are trying to pre-empt it in advance. The means of protest, the venues of protest, that is why I would suspect that the next step would be stricter government monitoring of political parties and even amending the parties law," Dr. Kamhawi said.

The Peking opera represents the last of a dying breed

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on Peking Opera. By the time the Cultural Revolution ended, the loss to Peking Opera was incalculable: an entire generation of young

people, many of them former Red Guards, who had received no exposure to the art or, worse, openly trashed it.

"Peking Opera is an art with historical and literary components, an integrated art," says

Luo at Beijing University. "But in the Cultural Revolution, you lost so much of that. If you want the generations who grew up during the Cultural Revolution to appreciate Peking Opera, they have to make up all the lessons they missed in history and literature." Before the opera could reclaim hearts and minds, however, it was swamped with competition from Western pop culture, which flooded China after the country's social and economic liberalization in 1979. Now, movies, rock concerts and karaoke bars draw millions of young Chinese on the weekends, leaving Peking Opera theaters empty of new blood.

"They think that it's something their grandpas and grandmas liked, so they shouldn't," says Wang Xiaofeng, a writer with the state-sponsored bimonthly magazine China Peking Opera. "Ask them if they've ever seen one, and they'll say no."

Luo, whose shelves are crammed with books on the art, found that nearly every one of his students considered Peking Opera's pace too slow and its fanciful stories too out of touch with reality. "Young people are more materialistic. They want to make money," says Sun Yumin, director of the Beijing Traditional Opera Academy.

The prestigious campus, once solely an operatic training ground, is now a general arts academy open to aspiring painters, sculptors and ballet dancers.

In fact, there are no schools left dedicated exclusively to Peking Opera, whereas there used to be several 40 years ago, opera buffs say. Then, talented youths were plucked from early childhood to prepare for a life on the stage, passing through an arduous training that involved practice from morning to night, under threat of the whip, to master disciplines from singing to dancing to martial arts.

"Now, persuading students to enroll in an arts academy for the required seven or eight years of training can be difficult. 'In Peking Opera, you don't make much money, and it involves sacrifices,' Sun says. "So young people don't last long."

LA Times-Washington Post News Service

Will AFM boom last, experts wonder

Continued from page 1

economist, has his own analysis. "One may wonder why foreign purchases related to blue chips shares, cement, phosphate and potash. They are not attractive either in price or return."

However, he adds that such activity was to be welcomed only in that it reactivated the stagnant cycle that dominated the market over the past years.

On the whole, however, Dr. Jabir says that portfolio investments are not that good because they may increase inflation, hike the value of the local currency and weaken the export competitiveness of the country.

Hence, whenever these portfolios decide to withdraw their capitals from the market—due to political or economic factors—then a great economic imbalance occurs.

Dr. Jabir said we must be prudent and not take the foreign economic investment argument too far.

Foreign investors, he argues, merely look for quick and short-term interest. They do not emphasize the transfer of

expertise and technology to the countries they invest in.

However, Hodeib's view is somewhat different. "Foreign capital inflow is welcomed since it could combine technology transfer and managerial expertise with local resources."

But he is careful to stress that foreign investment should go in line with major economic policies adopted by the government regarding the extent of foreign vis-a-vis Jordanian equity shares.

Generally speaking, Dr. Jabir stressed that the presence of foreign portfolios at this stage can be promising if they are properly directed and utilized.

"Our major concern should be given to attract direct investments. These kinds are a big challenge to maintain balanced development. According to Dr. Jabir this will certainly revive the labor market, help transfer of technology, and enhance the volume of exports."

But still there is another angle to that. Al Shaer argues that today's "high interest rates have a depressing effect on share prices." He, therefore, wants the Central Bank to review its policies with a view to reducing interest rates.

Mohammed Al Bilbeisi, the head of AFM Brokers Association expected the upward trend in the AFM to continue if it is associated with positive steps from the Central Bank, especially with regard to reducing interest rates.

Bilbeisi added that these for-

eign investors are encouraged by the government approval of the securities and companies laws and called on local investors and share dealers to follow their foreign counterparts.

On the other hand, economic experts explain the latest boom, particularly the high demand for strategic shares (cement, phosphate and potash), to the government's willingness to sell its stakes in some of these companies and privatize them.

Experts believe that the government should enlist shares of these companies in international stock exchanges, and call on international banks to present offers, regarding potash and cement shares.

Although "foreign" investments revived share dealings over the last few days, the official index fell last Tuesday to stabilize at 160-161 points compared with 163 last Sunday but such a drop is seen by experts as stable as they remain higher than previous levels.

Dr. Al Fanek said that this is normal and is in line with supply and demand. Similarly, that was a view shared by Hodeib. "As any financial market in the world, the AFM, is subject to daily fluctuations as a result of the interaction of the factors, demand and supply."

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People & Politics

Continued from page 3

against their government in their local press.

And what about the Internet? Most of the weeklies that the government is trying to curb have their own sites on the world wide web. The government could close down the print edition, but what about the Internet edition which could be published from anywhere in the world?

When the late Egyptian President Anwar Sadat cracked down on the press in his own country, many of them relocated to Cyprus, Greece, France and the UK. Secured from Egyptian press laws they became fiercer and more dangerous than when they were in Egypt under the eyes and noses of the government. Copies of the opposition magazines were smuggled into Egypt and sold on the black market.

The learned minister should have stuck to defending government actions, and not lecture us on the ethics of press freedom and the principles of industrial management of newspapers. That only added insult to injury.

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Women prisoners
Under the new law, women prisoners will be housed in separate facilities. The law also provides for the establishment of a women's prison in Amman.

Housing for the poor
The Housing Ministry has announced that it will build 10,000 new housing units for the poor in Amman over the next five years.

Chief editor set
The Chief Editor of the Jordanian Press Syndicate has been elected. The syndicate is a professional body for journalists in Jordan.

First woman in SA
The first woman to be elected to the Saudi Arabian Council of Ministers has been announced. She is a member of the Saudi National Guard.

The unusual way
A man in Jordan has been arrested for using an unusual method to commit suicide. He had swallowed a large amount of poison.

Fire in Fuheis
A large fire broke out in the town of Fuheis, Jordan, last night. The fire destroyed several houses and a school.

Systema for natural herbs

Systema Scientific is a local company that produces natural herbs. The herbs are used to treat a variety of ailments, including headaches, migraines, and depression.

It is extremely antibacterial and antifungal. The oil also stimulates the immune system. A concentrated form of the herb is used to drive out intestinal worms. Thyme is very useful to treat headaches and migraines.

A word of caution: Avoid therapeutic doses of thyme in pregnancy because the herb is a uterine stimulant.

هكذا من الله جل

JORDAN

W E E K



An unconventional report on Jordanian news and views edited by Marwan Al Asmar

Women prisoners freed
Under direct orders from His Majesty King Hussein, the conditions of women detention centers are to be reviewed. So far about 30 women prisoners have been set free. Due credit must be given to HRH Princess Zein Bint Al Hussein who visited some of these prisons. It was she who told her father of the conditions that these women were living under. Some of the inmates held in custody are non-Jordanians. The state of these centers, particularly those relating to women are also being reviewed with regard to their improvement. One of the ideas that is currently in circulation is to build a women's prison equipped with all modern amenities.

Housing for the needy
The Housing and Urban Development Corp., is to start a new ambitious plan to improve the quality of housing in Amman, Russeifa and Zerga. Fourteen housing locations are to be redeveloped according to the Director-General of the corporation, Mr Yusuf Hayasat. In addition to that, the corporation is to begin to upgrade the basic infrastructure of the 13 camps for Palestinian refugees that exist in Jordan. The government is doing this in cooperation with UNRWA. These developments are part of the government's social security projects. The costs of the first phase of the projects are JD 98 million. About JD 60 million will come from the World Bank in a form of a loan while the rest is to come as aid and grants from the German and Italian governments. The first phase of the project will be completed within the coming five years.

Chief editor set free
Al Ahali's chief editor Osama Al Rantissi has been set free after being held in detention in Al Jweidi correctional reform center for 10 days. Al Rantissi was held on libel charges relating to an article he wrote accusing the Jordan Hospital of losing JD 8 million and hinting that Israeli investors were offering to cover the hospital's debts. Al Rantissi was accused of lack of accuracy and objectivity and destroying the image and dignity of individuals. The chief editor was later released by the Judge of the Court of First Instance, Mahmood Al Qaisi. His arrest created a bit of a controversy. Earlier, General Secretary of Reporters Sans Frontiers Robert Menard appealed to His Majesty King Hussein for the editor's release. In a letter addressed directly to the King, the international organization for the defence of press freedom pointed out that "Jordan has ratified the Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, Article 19 of which guarantees the right to freedom of information." The letter added that "...We therefore ask you to use your influence to have Ossama Rantissi released immediately, and to ensure that journalists are not imprisoned, even if they are accused of libel and slander."

First woman in Salt Council
The first woman was appointed on the Salt Municipal Council after 100 years of its existence. Minister of Municipal, Rural Affairs and the Environment, Tawfiq Kreishan decided to appoint Rasmia Abu Hazeim on the Council. Ms Abu Hazeim is a member of the local women's committee of the national Coalition of the Women's Committees. The first council in Al Salt was elected in 1890. On another level, the Islamic Action Front is putting forward Nawal Al Faouri to run for the next legislative elections in November.

The unusual way
What a better way to commit suicide, I suppose its nothing to laugh about. The other day a man tried to burn himself using a small gas canister that is used to refill cigarette lighters. What's more, he did that in the King Abdullah Mosque, but he was quickly taken away by police. It was later said that the 47-year-old man was psychologically disturbed.

Fire in Fuheis
A large scale fire broke out in Al Fuheis Hospital, killing three people. Nine other inmates and nurses were also badly injured. The fire started in a warehouse on the ground floor and later spread to the rest of hospital. Inmates had to be evacuated, but eventually the Civil Defence Dept managed to put the fire under control.



His Majesty King Hussein speaking to the troops that took part in the 24-hour joint Jordan-US military maneuvers held in Qatariyah, Saturday. Over 2500 soldiers, helicopters, jet fighters and light and heavy armory participated in the war games that was code named "Infinite Moonlight 97." The exercises are meant to improve the training ability of the Jordanian troops, said Col. Yehia Malkawi from the Training Directorate at Army Headquarters. The maneuvers were held in the desert, 80 kilometers south of Amman.

Cancer victims
Coping with the disease

By Zein Salameh
Special to The Star

THE SUFFERING of a cancer patient begins the moment he discovers that he has cancer. This pain is mainly psychological rather than physical. Learning to cope with the initial shock can be the hardest. This of course also depends on the stage of the discovery of the disease and at which time it was diagnosed. A cancer patient who discovers his illness early can have a different reaction to a one who discovers it at a later stage. The process of the acceptance of cancer is very difficult. A primary reaction for cancer patients is complete denial. The victim goes into a deep stupor of anxiousness with frequently bouts of depression. "Initially, I became an introvert, tormenting myself with question of 'why did it have to happen to me,'" said a 40-year-old victim. However, this is usually followed by the unwilling acceptance of fate. "After a while, and when things settled down, I've learnt to accept it," he added. Psychotherapy can be crucial in the treatment of cancer victims. If a patient is depressed, his immunity will create leukocytes that destroys sound cells. The result is ironical. While chemotherapy and other methods of treatment are used to destroy cancer cells, the body's immunity will destroy sound ones. The Social Rehabilitation Dept., at Al Amal Center provides palliative support for cancer patients. Actually, this department is yet to become operational. However, there are detailed plans for the kind of psychological support that cancer victims need. Psychotherapy should be given in different ways. The first step is for the social worker to establish confidence with the patient. This could actually take a longer time than it is thought. The social worker should become a 'friend,' allowing the patient to talk about whatever problems he has even if these are not related to his illness. It is very important to listen to a cancer patient. Establishing support groups may be another form of relief. These groups include sufferers as well as former cancer victims who have been cured. Such groups are important because they establish a "circle of support," people to talk about and exchange experiences. One victim said "talking about my ailment to others who understood what I am going through provided an avenue of relief." Frequently, support groups are also important for the victims family. Their members are affected deeply by the trauma. The household is

turned upside down. But again families differ in their reaction. One family completely broke down when they heard that their 11-year-old daughter had a malignant tumor. The mother just could not cope with the family chores. It was only thanks to the support of relatives that the family was able to overcome the trauma. But there are also other professional organizations. Al Malath Foundation for Human Care is an autonomous, nonprofit, voluntary organization that provides hospice care for terminally ill patients. Al Malath hospice was established in 1993. It now cures for 120 cancer patients. This foundation depends on a philosophy that believes in improving the quality of life rather than in lengthening it. Its primary aim is to enable a cancer patient to die comfortably and with dignity. The hospice care is provided through a team of skilled professionals. Their job is to control pain and manage its symptoms. The team consists of physicians, nurses, pain specialists, rehabilitation therapists, social workers, a dietician and trained volunteers. This team also gives a psychological, spiritual, and social support. The hospice is also concerned with the needs of the caregivers in the family. The foundation helps and teaches those caregivers to be able to provide proper support. It also supports the family throughout their bereavement. Al Malath is the only hospice foundation in the Arab world. You can help cancer patients in relieving their pains by donating to the foundation. We must always remember that Al Malath provides its services free of charge to cancer patients. You can also help by registering your name in the hospice care team as a volunteer.

People & Politics

The incredible spokesman

The Brouhaha caused by the amended press and publication law lingers on. The JPA is waiting for government response to suggested amendments to the new law, which they had dispatched to the Prime Ministry following a meeting with the premier last week. No word from the Fourth Circle yet, but the government has made it clear that no changes will be made to the temporary law until the new parliament convenes. Meanwhile, the JPA is hoping to weather down another storm in its general meeting this Friday. JPA's President Saif Al Sharif had come under fire for his decision to open dialogue with the government rather than follow in the footsteps of his peers at other professional unions and resign in protest. Most likely he will be able to deal with members of his association who have gathered against him. But will the government give him something to take to his followers. Very unlikely. Minister of State for Information Affairs Dr Samir Mutawa spent most of the time beating around the bush when he was interviewed by Rami Khouri on *Encounter* this week. And the sad thing is that Mr Khouri, a seasoned journalist, let him get away with it. Dr Mutawa presented a weak case that centered more on symptoms rather than causes. Apart from praising himself as one of the most dedicated information ministers—funny, his predecessor was working hard to write off the ministry altogether—Dr Mutawa gave those who had the stomach to watch the TV program a lecture on good journalism. Again Mr Khouri let him off the hook. Still, as a government spokesman one would not have expected Dr Mutawa to act differently. But while the minister was patronizing the interviewer and the whole wide world, we feel Dr Mutawa had failed to score when he questioned the wisdom of having union leaders and association presidents concern themselves with an issue such as the press law. Really, Dr Mutawa's Freedom of speech is a constitutional right for all Jordanians and although the minister says the government is only interested in organizing the industry we feel, along with many Jordanians, that the issue is a little more complicated than that. It would have been wise for the interviewer to remind the minister that not all opposition centers on the nature of the controversial amendments, but on the way with which the government had decided to carry them out—avoiding any public debate of the issue and side-stepping the deputies and the JPA in the process. It would have been wise to remind the knowledgeable minister that while there is sympathy for the government's desire to curb some of the excesses of the yellow press, prior to the 1993 press law, which opened the way for tens of titles to appear on the newsstands, political parties and "dissidents" resorted to what became to be known in Jordan as the "fax wars". In the absence of free press, those who did not have a forum of their own, resorted to sending unsigned faxes to people everywhere attacking and discrediting the government and distinguished people and spreading rumors, lies and allegations. The "fax wars" ended when licensed newspapers representing all shades of the political spectrum appeared—and they were all made accountable under the law. The minister should be reminded that it is far better to have 20 troublesome newspapers, that can be taken to court if they break the law, than dealing with hundreds if not thousands of unauthorized "publishers" who resort to faxing fiery statements and lies. The minister should take note that in countries where there is no freedom of press, the opposition always finds ways to make its voice heard. While there are tens of internet sites that are against Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Iraq, Syria, Egypt, etc., there is not single one that is anti-Jordan. Why? Because Jordanians felt they could say whatever they wanted

Continued on page 2

People & Politics

Systema for natural herbs

Systema Scientific Research is a local company that deal with natural herbs. Garden Thyme (T. vulgaris) is the cultivated form of wild thyme (T. Serpyllum). Known as "Mother of thyme" probably because of its traditional use for menstrual disorders, wild thyme derives its Latin name from the plant's serpent-like growth. Pliny recommends it as an antidote for snakebites, "poison of marine creatures" and headaches. Roman burned the plant believing that its fumes would repel scorpions. In Jordan Thyme is grown in Ma'an Salt and Irbid. It is the best in the world. Its character is pungent, slightly bitter, warm, dry. Its constituents is volatile oil, bitter principle, saponins, triterpenes, flavonoids, tannins. An antiseptic expectorant, the aerial parts are ideal for chest infections. They are also a useful digestive remedy, for stomach chills and diarrhoea. Harvest before and during flowering in summer. The leaves and flowers have similar actions to the cultivated garden variety but are slightly more stimulating and effective at preventing spasms. They can also be taken for menstrual pain. It is extremely antibacterial and antifungal, the oil also stimulates the immune system. A concentrated form of the herb, it is good for respiratory and digestive problems. Thyme emulsion is used to strengthen the heart and stomach and relief their pains. Thyme oil is used to drive out intestinal worms. Thyme is very useful to treat headache and migraine. A word of caution. Avoid therapeutic doses of thyme and thyme oil in any form in pregnancy because the herb is a uterine stimulant.

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LURIE'S WORLD



(Lurie's cartoon: The Supreme Court decision to allow a sexual harassment lawsuit proceeded against President Bill Clinton has overshadowed his foreign policy success with the NATO-Russia Pact.)

Our Say...

Building a mood of reconciliation

THE VISIT this week to Jordan by Saudi Foreign Minister Prince Saud Al Faisal to Jordan is an important one from the perspective of rebuilding the Arab political order to deal with the looming and present challenges.

For starters, the Jordanian role in reviving the Middle East peace process has been paramount. That role has been a linchpin in regional and international efforts to save the process from collapse. Since the US has opted to withdraw momentarily from any active mediation between the Palestinians and the Israelis, Jordan and Egypt have taken the brunt of the responsibility to maintain contacts between the two sides.

But while the two former confrontation states maintain highest levels of contacts and coordination between them, the lack of an Arab political stand with regard to recent developments between the Palestinians and the Israelis and over other issues such as the Turkish incursion into northern Iraq has been evident.

The Saudi input in the formulation of such an Arab political stand is vital and central. As a major regional player, Saudi Arabia's role in the early stages of the Middle East peace process was instrumental in the successful launching of that process.

For Jordan, coordination with Saudi Arabia is a major foreign policy objective. That country is our southern neighbor with which we maintain vital economic and political links. Since relations were normalized in recent years through the personal intervention of Their Majesties King Hussein and King Fahd, bilateral relations have been more focused than ever. Trade exchange figures are encouraging, while more Jordanians are being hired by Saudi private and public sector bodies. For us our relations with Saudi Arabia carry a huge strategic value. Hence the importance of Prince Saud Al Faisal's visit.

It is hoped that such frank and candid exchange of views will result in a more coherent Arab policy towards on-going issues: from the peace process to biting UN sanctions against Iraq and rebuilding the Arab order after the damage it had sustained as a result of the Gulf War.

Saudi Arabia's role in those three issues, among others, is central. With regard to Iraq, Saudi Arabia can influence local Gulf politics as well as those of the United States in modifying positions towards Iraq, which has suffered enormously as a result of the sanctions regime. Jordan has taken bold steps recently towards easing the suffering of the Iraqi people at the humanitarian level. With the oil-for-food deal now up for renewal, the Iraqis need the support of all Arab countries so as to guarantee a swift extension of that deal.

The Saudis can help in creating a mood of reconciliation in the Arab world by adopting clear-cut positions with regard to Iraq and the safeguarding of its territorial integrity. That mood, we hope, will extend to cover Kuwait as well, with whom Jordan has been seeking to normalize relations for some time.

Such a departure from the current state of malaise that has characterized pan-Arab politics since 1990 will reflect positively on the Middle East process as well.

For the French, their state is still the thing

By Anne Swardson

PARIS—Three-and-a-half centuries after King Louis XIV first said, "L'Etat, c'est moi" (The state, it is I), the French people showed yet again just how attached they are to a strong, active and interventionist government.

The message of the overwhelming victory of the Socialist Party in its large part that France, unlike nearly every other developed democracy in the world today, is not inclined toward smaller government or free markets. The nation that already has the highest tax burden and the largest public payroll in Europe has opted to stay that way.

Socialist Party leader, and next prime minister, Lionel Jospin overturned a huge conservative majority in the legislature not by promising to meet such post-Cold War challenges as the burgeoning low-wage economies of East Asia but by pledging to create 700,000 new jobs for youth, half in the public sector.

In a nation with one of the highest budget deficits in Europe, he spoke out against "austerity" and said he would fight for "social Europe," a code word for broad benefits and labor protections. "I think that France is a country sufficiently particular that one cannot brutally renounce its culture and its history," Jospin said in an interview with the magazine *Le Nouvel Observateur* last month. Although he called for an "evolution of statism," plus more decentralization and initiative, he warned against "rupture with public service, with the values that founded the republic."

President Jacques Chirac and his departing prime minister, Alain Juppé, were hamstrung in a different way by the French attachment to the state.

They decided they could not risk running on the blessings of less government, more enterprise. They spoke little of business privatization, of the advantages to the taxpayer of smaller government, of the connection between job creation and the liberty to lay off and restructure work forces—all messages heard on both sides of the political spectrum in the United States and Britain.

In France, a nation with 12.8 percent unemployment whose people see the state as guarantor of jobs and welfare, their stance left little reason to choose the right.

The incumbents' record suffered from the same defect, Juppé, with Chirac's blessing, marginally streamlined health care, froze bureaucrats' salaries and slightly reduced lavish retirement benefits for transport workers, but never clearly explained why he was doing so. Rather, it was known as "France across the sea," officially annexed by France.

All they did was anger voters. The key word is "liberal," in the European, Adam Smith sense, of the invisible

hand and laissez faire. That word was rarely uttered by the right during the campaign, and was used instead by Jospin and his Communist Party allies for pejorative attacks on their conservative opponents—usually accusing them of "ultra-liberalism," or "hyper-liberalism."

"Paradoxically, the (center-right) majority lost... by being accused of having created a liberal policy that it did not in fact operate," said conservative philosopher Jean-François Revel in an interview with *Le Figaro* newspaper last week, referring to the first-round rout.

The roots of the French belief in government go back to the monarchy, and to the subsequent revolutions, which were fought more against tyranny than against government per se. After World War II, France rebuilt its economy to one of the most prosperous in the world largely through the extensive economic planning begun by Jean Monnet.

Even now, the French see before them such effective—if expensive—state institutions as a beautiful

The question is whether the French can afford to continue their love affair with the state. Some 54 percent of the economy's activity comes from government spending, more than any other major country in Western Europe and half again as much as in the United States and Japan. One-quarter of all workers and 15 percent of the entire population works in the public sector.

Forces outside France are pressing for change. The nations of Europe have agreed that to qualify for the planned single currency, budget deficits must be cut. The on-going reduction in trade barriers ordains that businesses must be as efficient as possible to sell overseas and compete against foreign companies at home. Jospin, a former economics professor, will have to find a way to meet these challenges while maintaining the French faith in "l'etat."

LA Times-Washington Post News Service



(Lurie's cartoon: With the election setback for France, President Chirac's conservative party, Socialist leader Lionel Jospin will have to enlist support from both the Communist and the Green Parties in order to form a new governing coalition.)

Algeria must not become another Iran

By Carrie Nelle Moye

THE RECENT election of Mohammed Khatami as president of Iran is expected to usher in a more moderate era. Nevertheless, official statements have indicated that although Iran will be willing to reestablish a working relationship with other Western countries, it still considers the United States to be a pariah. Even if US leadership is optimistic it will be able slowly to develop new, productive diplomatic ties with the Persian state, Iran will remain a constant, if covert, threat.

Thus it is even more important that we pay special attention to a growing fundamentalism on the Western side of the Middle East—almost at the underbelly of Western Europe—Algeria. Presently this nation is in political turmoil which could greatly affect stability in Europe, Africa, and the Middle East for generations.

Algeria is the only country in which I have lived where I never felt the people were secure (or safe) in their own identity. Indeed, in the Algiers suburb of Bordj Al Kiffan, which was my home for three years, there are at least monthly news reports of terrorist attacks on both foreigners and locals.

There is a reason for the amalgamation and consequent unrest and insecurity of the Algerians. During the 132 years of French occupation, Algeria was ruled both figuratively and literally by its conquerors. The basic language, Arabic, which had been spoken by a majority of the Islamic population, was forbidden, as was the Kabili of the mountainous tribespeople. French was the language of the schools, economy, and society. Upper class Algerians were assimilated into the French

culture, whereas the middle and lower classes had their land confiscated, as they became the blue collar and farm labor work force. So prized was the land that the French did not consider Algeria to be a colony as were other countries they had seized. Rather, it was known as "France across the sea," officially annexed by France.



Algeria's President LIAISON ZEROUAL

The revolution of 1954-1962 which established the independence of Algeria, left the country in confusion which, combined with quarreling leadership and a national attempt to return to its various native origins, became chaos. In the early 1990s, as the poor became poorer and the promises of elected leaders did not materialize in substantial economic reform, a large percentage of the population turned toward Islamic fundamentalism, the only force

which appeared to offer the have-nots a promise of prosperity, if not in the present, then in the hereafter.

Thus, it is that this exceedingly large, oil-rich, lushly vegetative, mountainous, desert country is experiencing its most crucial juncture in its history, verging on becoming an

"Iran-of-the-West," posing a major threat to developing democracy in Africa and the Middle East, and established democracies in Europe. Islamic parties, notably the now illegal FIS (Islamic Salvation Front) had won resounding victories in elections in 1990 (local) and 1991 (national). These victories were not a reflection of voters' preference but a vote against the establishment and corruption.

Furthermore, the FIS openly declared that it considered democracy and elections a stepping stone toward power, noting that once this goal was achieved, democracy would be abolished and elections never repeated. This led to a coup d'etat by the Western-oriented military, followed by the free election of Lyemine Zeroual. The route to his empowerment is to be questioned. Nevertheless, he has proven to be a man intent on extricating Algeria from its crises, reforming the economy and alleviating the social ills.

Abolishing the one-party system, Zeroual has carried out an internationally approved referendum on a new, democratic constitution. He has launched a major effort to privatize the economy, liberalize monetary and banking systems, and encourage foreign investment and private enterprise. Parliamentary elections are being held 5 June.

For the first time in almost 200 years, Algerians have a free press and freedom of

speech. Nevertheless, fanatical forces hiding behind the veil of Islam are committing atrocious mass murders, slaughtering civilians—including females, young and old. They have killed scores of professors, physicians, journalists, artists and civil servants. Mostly the educated classes which rebel against fundamentalist control.

It is estimated that over the past five years, 60,000 Algerians have been murdered by these terrorists. The world, especially the United States and Europe, can not afford to ignore Algeria as a non-treatable disease as it did Afghanistan and Somalia. Algeria is too strategic to be left to destiny. Should Algeria fall to the fundamentalists, all of Northern Africa will follow suit, as will some of the Middle East. The US, Germany, Belgium, the UK and other European countries have been harboring fugitive leaders of the FIS and its hybrid offspring, the GIA (Armed Islamic Group), giving asylum and freedom to agitate and even smuggle arms and money into Algeria.

Algeria has all the assets to become a democratic, flourishing country. The current government is pledged to achieve this goal. But the only way to eradicate the FIS-GIA is for the West to cease providing sanctuary for them. The US took a positive step by arresting FIS leader Anwar Haddam for immigration law violations. France, Italy and Spain have begun cracking down on the FIS-GIA subsidiaries after enduring planted bombs and assassinations.

Others, most notably Germany, must follow suit. Yet, as this is being written, the newly elected Iranian regime is speaking of becoming more closely associated with Germany. With the reluctance of the Teutonic state to challenge the Algerian terrorists, this news does not bode well.

Middle East Beat

Change in Turkey

IT IS curious that the European term for describing the later stages of the Ottoman Empire, "The sick man of Europe," still viewed the Ottomans in European terms, for not being the sick man of Asia, despite the expanse of the eastern territories ruled by the Sultans. Just as in modern times, there were the detractors and supporters of the Ottoman empire to Europe.

The admirers and critics of modern-day Turkey, have hinged their criteria on the issue of human rights, or, for some, the abuse of human rights. The view supporting the irrelevance of human rights when contrasted with the Turkish potential of serving western interests, and that which upholds respect for the human dimension to gain entry into Europe, does not consider the crucial factor that determines democratic practice in Europe and Turkey: that of the military.

The Turkish constitution gives a clear mandate to the Turkish Army to defend the country against external and internal threats. This essentially means that the military intervention in politics is a normal process when the National Security Council deems it necessary. In other words, multi-party elections, and the democratically-elected parliament will have to conform to the circumference drawn by the Turkish National Security Council. The Army still holds sway in the traditional sense. Hence, when it comes to Turkey, the question of European values, must include the subject of habitual military intervention in national politics.

But under what criteria does the Turkish National Security Council, deems it necessary to interfere in civilian politics? The usual answer has always been to uphold and guard Kemalist values. This means the preservation of the social structure of secular Turkey without taking into consideration the fact that many who voted for Mr. Erbakan's Refah, did so to crystallize a Turkish identity rather than *Shari'a*. The same applies to Refah which also missed the point. The vote and support of the urban under-classes and the rural poor for Mr. Erbakan is at the heart of Turkey's sole searching parody in the modern age.

The diverse ethnic composition, and the constant internal migration from the rural areas dictated the formation of a supra ideology that accommodate ethnic groups, and supports the feeble against westernization, and forced finance-capitalism—the twin engines of the Kemalist locomotive.

That is not to say that the army did not have any support when it intervened in politics. Many in the countryside, and urban poor previously supported the army's military blows against pluralism. They supported the defenders of values they are familiar with, and which gave them pride in their sense of belonging, as opposed to a democratic system which failed to address their problems.

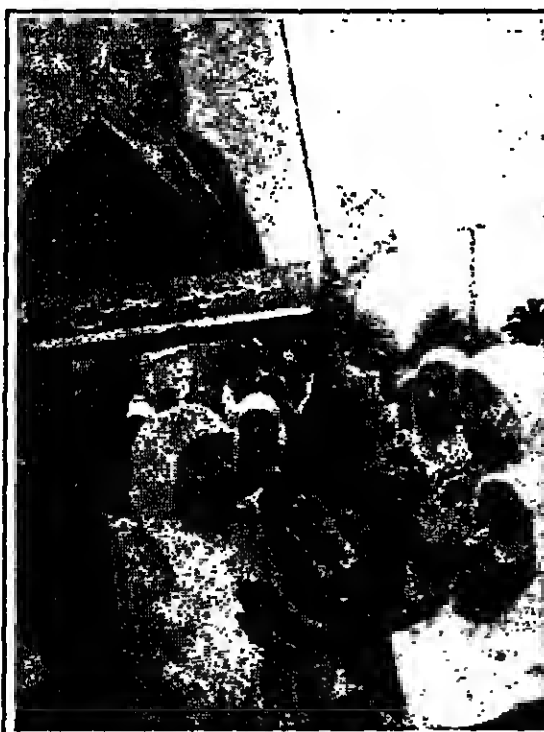
The point remains to be seen if Refah manages to instill in the Turkish people the idea that it provides itself as the alternative to the aggressive westernization and consumerism engulfing the country; and more importantly if it desires to protect the image that the military is the defender of the same values that the people do not want, or, the Turkish Army will still be able to present itself as the true upholder of Turkish identity and culture. However, in either case both sides may chew more than they can swallow.

Mr. Erbakan gave Mrs. Ciller a grand concession into Israeli territory, and played hand in glove with Turkish nationalism aspirations, as opposed to Islamic universalism. What will happen when roles are reversed?

● Supporters of Mahfouz Nehnaah chant Islamic slogans, just two days before the Algerian legislative elections which is due to take place today, Thursday, 5 June. Nehnaah's Peace Movement for an Islamic Society is one of several parties that is fighting the elections.

The government is taking no chances. Pupils have been off school for the last two days, and weekly markets have been closed till after the elections.

The United Nations have sent observers to monitor the elections. The exiled Islamic Salvation Front has called on its supporters to boycott the elections.



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Business scene

■ The Bank of Jordan has announced that it will increase its capital from 100 million to 150 million Jordanian dinars (JD) in 1997. The bank's capital is currently 100 million JD, and it has a reserve of 100 million JD. The bank's assets are 1.5 billion JD, and its liabilities are 1.5 billion JD. The bank's profit for 1996 was 10 million JD.

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Publisher's death brings up specter of ultimate censorship

By Nicholas Goldberg

TEHRAN—On March 29, a little more than a month after he disappeared, Ibrahim Zalzadeh's body turned up at the morgue in the city coroner's office.

In another country, his family might have assumed that the 49-year-old magazine publisher had been the victim of a car accident or some other relatively innocent tragedy. But in Iran, thoughts tend toward the more sinister.

Indeed, a few days later, when friends of the family finally saw the body and reported that Zalzadeh had been stabbed three or four times in the chest, the family's suspicions deepened. "He was stabbed in the heart," said a close friend who asked not to be identified. "It certainly wasn't an accident."

No one knows for sure, and most likely, no one will ever know whether Zalzadeh was killed by the hard-line Islamic regime that rules Iran. But he had been on the bad side of the government lately, having publicly criticized it for censoring authors. His own magazine, Mayar, had closed after its supply of newsprint was cut by the government, and in the weeks before he disappeared, he told friends that he felt threatened by the government.

What's more, his death came in the wake of similar misfortunes that have befallen writers and intellectuals such as Ghassem Ghahvari, Ahmad Mir-Ali, and Ahmad Taffazouli, among others. In all, more than a half-dozen of Iran's intellectual elite have been mysteriously killed in the past two years here.

"It's all very, very suspicious," said Daryoush Farouhar, a longtime opponent of the Iranian regime. "Zalzadeh is not the only one who has died recently."

All these years after the mullahs took power in Iran, it's hardly news that the government of Iran has no soft spot for writers and intellectuals. Since the Islamic revolution that brought Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini to power 18 years ago, the government has refused to tolerate movies, books, magazines or other artistic endeavors that make use of



With the election of a new president could Iran be moving on the road to a newly found greater cultural freedom?

sexual imagery or are perceived as excessively "Western," unfavorable to Islam or even slightly antigovernment. For those who didn't get the message, there was the Salman Rushdie affair in 1989, in which Khomeini issued a religious decree calling for the death of the British author for writing a novel deemed blasphemous to Islam.

The most recent crackdown—the so-called "black period," which began about two years ago and has meant imprisonment and, in the opinion of many Iranian intellectuals, death for a group of those who would not be silenced—is a new law, a part of a concerted effort, according to human rights groups, by authorities here to clamp down on thought and expression perceived as dangerous to the Islamic republic. Human Rights Watch, in a letter to the head of the Iranian judiciary last month, expressed concern about "a pattern of repression directed against independent writers and publishers in Iran."

"The regime is determined not to see the reality that is before them," said Abbas Maroufi, an Iranian writer and publisher whose magazine, Gardoun, was closed down and

who was himself sentenced to 20 lashes and a six-month prison term for an article that supposedly criticized the regime and insulted its leaders. "They know that writers are like a mirror, and that if you let them write, you cannot any longer ignore the reality."

Yet despite the heavy-handed tactics of the regime, the battle goes on. One publisher said in an interview last week that he had 35 books—some with thousands of copies already printed, others in manuscript form—currently gathering dust in the office of the censors at what is euphemistically known as the "Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance," and that he had so far been refused permission to distribute them to bookstores. Films are routinely cut and changed by bureaucrats in the office of film censorship. Books of poetry, some of which have been published for decades, are being banned or changed in their ninth or 10th edition. Famous Iranian writers have been deleted from the latest issues of the Iranian Encyclopedia of Literature. In the last year and a half, according to Farouhar, some 20 publications have lost their licenses to publish, and editors, in many cases, have

been arrested, convicted and punished.

The latest wave of repression began after Ali Akbar Saidi-Sirjani died in detention under mysterious circumstances in the end of 1994. A coroner's report was never released.

Then, when 134 writers and intellectuals signed a letter to the then President Hashemi Rafsanjani protesting the handling of the case, every single one of the signers received anonymous death threats. One of the signers, Mir-Ali, an editor at the magazine Zendeherod, died in suspicious circumstances in Isfahan in October 1995, according to Human Rights Watch. In the months that followed, security agents raided the houses of writers and broke up meetings. A number have been sentenced to lashings and prison terms. Zalzadeh, Hosseini and Taffazouli have all died since the beginning of the year.

Though other things are more horrible, perhaps nothing is as eerily symbolic of what's going on as the melting of books. It's happened on numerous occasions: The Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance takes books that have already been printed, but not yet distributed, and they hold them in

a warehouse while reviewing the content. If they decide the book should not be allowed into the stores, they take all existing copies—in one case, there were 11,000 of them—and bring them by truck to a cardboard plant, where they are washed in a big pot to get the ink off. The pages are then shredded, and finally are cooked into a paste. The paste is then recycled into cardboard.

"They've burned my store down and they've arrested me and they've taken my books and put them back into the pot and made them into dough," one publisher said. "But the funny thing is, I still love my job, because I feel I haven't made any compromises to them... The problems here have happened gradually and we've become resistant or used to them, or we just learned to survive them."

There are numerous responses to the repression. Some publishers have gone ahead with their work, like Zalzadeh and Maroufi, and have been punished for it. Many writers and intellectuals, particularly in recent days, have left the country altogether. Many others have learned to censor themselves.

"Self-censorship is extremely common," said one person in the book industry. "First, the writers kill their own creativity and suppress their talent so their books will be acceptable to the regime, and then the editor makes further changes. You can imagine what the result is."

But the crackdown has not completely chilled free expression. Writers and publishers still gather at people's houses and read their work to one another. Poems that have been banned are photocopied and distributed. Western books are smuggled into the country and duplicated. Like the samizdat publishing endeavors of the former Soviet Union, entire books are copied unofficially and passed hand-to-hand through Tehran. Underground newsletters are distributed by fax.

"The government is frightened, of course," Farouhar said. "In any atmosphere of this oppressive, the writers, artists and intellectuals are the ones who best convey the suffering of the people, the emotions they're feeling, and dictators are afraid of that. But they won't be able to stop it."

LA Times-Washington Post News Service



A youth in Bethlehem tries to breakthrough Palestinian police officers hold to attack an Israeli soldier, Saturday. Mass demonstrations erupted on the West Bank as a result of what is seen as provocative Israeli statements regarding the West Bank. Israeli Minister of Security Avigdor Kahalani earlier said that in any final deal reached with the Palestinians, Israel should control 50 percent of the West Bank territory.

Palestinian rights group accuses PNA of "torture on a large scale"

By Barton Gelman

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM—A newly founded Palestinian human rights organization, defying a taboo among its peers, described last Monday what it called "norms of illegal behavior" and "torture on a large scale" by Yasser Arafat's Palestinian Authority.

In a political culture that has silenced many critics, the boldness of the organizers, who called a news conference at an Arab-owned hotel in East Jerusalem, stood out as much as their measured and critical report.

Bassam Eid, 39, an internationally recognized rights campaigner who spent years documenting Israeli abuses in the occupied territories, said he founded the Palestinian Human Rights Monitoring Group last year because he believes Palestinians should hold themselves to the same standards they apply to Israel.

"As a Palestinian, I believe that we can have a democracy, but we will have it only by practicing it," he said.

In 90 minutes of blunt talk about lawless killings and routine brutality, Eid advised Palestinian security forces to "worry less about their image and more about their behavior," and laid the alleged abuses directly at Arafat's door.

"We are putting the responsibility on Yasser Arafat," he said, adding in remarks aimed at the Palestinian leader, "You are the president. You are the person who takes responsibility over all

the autonomous areas."

Asked whether he could have held his news conference in Palestinian-ruled Ramallah, he answered, "No."

Khaled Kidra, who is chief prosecutor under Arafat, denied in an interview with Israel Radio's Arabic service that there is a policy of torture in Palestinian jails. Isolated cases will be investigated and punished, he said.

It has been some time since any Palestinian challenged either Arafat or his security chiefs as directly as Eid has done. Nationalism and fear have prevented the many Arab human rights groups that flourished under Israeli occupation from airing similar complaints against the Palestinian Authority. Several provided data to Eid, but they were not willing to sign the report or appear at his news conference.

Monday's human rights survey came as one of the best-known Palestinian journalists, Daoud Kuttab, completed a sixth day of detention by Palestinian police, who have yet to charge him publicly. Kuttab, an American citizen who had been fighting official efforts to jam his telecasts of unflattering Palestinian legislative debates, began a hunger strike last Friday after police—acting, they said, on Arafat's direct orders—banned visits by his family or US consular officials.

Kuttab's confinement persisted despite a written pledge over the weekend by Al Quds University, which owns the tele-

vision station directed by Kuttab, that it would halt the legislative broadcasts.

The new report draws on what it said were 42 documented cases of torture in 1996 and 1997, and declares that "nearly all of the security services" of the self-rule authority, which are numerous, and all ranks of those within them "routinely use forbidden methods."

Among the commonplace tortures, it said, are beatings with rifle butts, clubs and electrical cables stripped of their insulation, and tying or hanging of suspects in painful positions for hours to days. Less commonly, it said, they include burning with melted plastic or cigarettes, sexual abuse and subjection to extreme cold.

Victims, the report said, are sometimes required to sign confessions that describe crimes they could not have committed. One example cited was of a man imprisoned in Israel between 1991 and 1994, who was tortured until he admitted to a killing that took place in Bethlehem in 1993. Another man, the report said, was "whipped and beaten to force him to confess to the murder of his friend, who was being whipped and beaten in the next room."

There was no mention of the report on the Arafat-controlled Voice of Palestine radio or television Monday night. None of the three Palestinian daily newspapers has mentioned Kuttab's arrest.

Eid, spotting a reporter from the Al Quds daily at his news conference, laughed and asked why he had bothered to attend. The reporter said he hoped that Eid's report would mention Israeli abuses that he could publish.

In the past, the Palestinian police have briefly arrested Eid and branded him an Israeli agent in apparent efforts to intimidate him. The latter accusation, not supported then or since, implied a mortal threat because hundreds of alleged collaborators have been killed in the past 10 years.

But Eid, who lives in East Jerusalem's Shuafat refugee camp, has attracted an international following and financial support.

Monday's report had financial support from the Canada Fund, the European Commission, the Netherlands and the Norwegian Human Rights Fund. ■

LA Times-Washington Post News Service

Commercial TV station has been shut down numerous times

RAMALLAH, Occupied West Bank—Omur Nazzal, whose commercial Watan television station broadcasts about 13 hours of entertainment, news and talk shows from Ramallah each day, said his station was shut down four times in its first four months of operation, including once after the September 1996 clashes between Israeli soldiers and Palestinian police. Although Nazzal had complied with an order to block out the faces of Palestinian police engaged in the combat, he received a second order to close down the broadcasts.

Nazzal had his newscaster read the closure order on the air.

"That really angered them. After we read the closure order, police came and tried to confiscate our equipment," Nazzal said. "We closed and went to the governor of Ramallah to ask why. He said, 'If you hadn't read the closure order on the air, you would be open now.'"

Nazzal had another run-in with police in December, after Palestinian gunmen killed two residents of the Beit El Jewish settlement in a drive-by shooting. The assailants were members of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, a militant group opposed to the peace process which had been

running ads on Watan for a festival.

"The police wanted us to run an ad saying the festival had been canceled. We said, 'How can we say that when it's not true?' Intelligence officers and police were here for five hours and said we could either run the fake ad or be closed down. We came to a compromise. The police would go on the air and announce the cancellation." Nazzal believes that Palestinians must have an alternative to the official media. "This private media must be open to all Palestinian people, all political, social and economic sectors of society," he said. ■

LA Times-Washington Post News Service

Land dealers as criminals

A matter of sovereignty

By Marjorie Miller

YATTA, WEST Bank—Mohammed Masri's neighbors say they do not know whether he sold Palestinian land to Jews, but they are certain of one thing: If he did, he should be executed.

Masri—an insurance salesman, according to his wife—is one of at least a dozen Palestinians arrested in the last three weeks on suspicion of selling Arab land to Israelis. Most will stand trial soon, and if convicted they will face the death penalty. Palestinian Justice Minister Freih Abu Medeen says.

To Israelis and Americans, this may well seem an abhorrent example of anti-Semitism on the part of Yasser Arafat's Palestinian Authority. Jesse Helms, chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, has threatened to cut US aid to the Palestinian Authority over the issue.

But to Palestinians, it is a question of sovereignty. Selling land to Israelis, they say, is selling off the Palestinian homeland to the enemy. It is a crime of treason.

On this point, Palestinian

leaders and their people appear to be in complete agreement.

"If it is proven that any individual has sold land to the Israelis, he deserves to be executed," said Sheikh Issa Abu Zahrah, 44, owner of a construction supply shop. "Even if he is my own father."

Salah Tumari, head of the Palestinian Legislative Council's Land and Settlement Committee, belongs to an apparent minority of Palestinians who ordinarily oppose the death penalty. But he heartily defends the decision to enforce the land-sale law, dug out of Jordanian codes still in force in the West Bank, which Israel captured from Jordan in 1967.

Land always has been at the heart of the conflict between Israel and the Palestinians, who want an independent state in the West Bank and Gaza Strip with East Jerusalem as the capital. Shortly after the 1967 Middle East War, Israel annexed almost 18,000 acres of East Jerusalem and open areas of the West Bank to West Jerusalem. They declared the "ruined" city Israel's capital. Israelis went on to build 140 Jewish settlements on this land,

plus roads and infrastructure on an additional 84,000 acres of the West Bank.

Much of that land was confiscated, but some was "bought" decades ago from Arabs, including a large swath of the hill in southeastern Jerusalem that Israelis call Har Homa and Palestinians call Jabal Abu Ghneim. Israel's decision to build a 6,500-unit Jewish neighborhood in that traditionally Arab area has led to a breakdown in peace negotiations and to the May 5 announcement that those convicted of selling Arab land to Jews will face the death penalty.

There are five Jewish settlements near this West Bank village, on land that Palestinians say once was theirs. This Muslim farming town south of Hebron straddles a one-lane road that winds through the crowded Al Fawar refugee camp and on past rows of fruit-laden cactus, golden wheat fields and silver-green olive groves.

At sunset, the men of Yatta crouch by the side of the mosque in traditional robes or sit in plastic chairs outside shops to exchange the news of

the day. This is how word spread nearly three weeks ago that Masri and his friend Miteh Mahmoud Dahdour had been arrested by the Palestinian Preventive Security.

Sixteen days had passed since Masri was summoned to the office of the Preventive Security force and walked out the door. His wife, Hana, said she had neither seen him since then nor been notified officially of his arrest. All she knew of the allegations against him came from a cousin who works in the General Intelligence Service and from town gossip.

Medeen said at a news conference last week that 12 Palestinians had been arrested on suspicion of selling land to Jews and at least seven of them would be put on trial under the law that he said Jordanians used to sentence about 150 land sellers and execute 10 of them.

At Preventive Security, officers confirmed that Masri was detained on suspicion of illegal land sales and was still under investigation. They would not say where or speak further about his case.

"If we lose the land, we will end up as slaves to Israel," said one security agent in plain clothes. "They are killing us slowly by taking our land." ■



AROUND TOWN

● Muna Hendash won second prize in the Fourth Solo Song and Music Festival that was held by the Music Department of the University of Jordan last week. She was just beaten by Iskandri Mousa who received first prize.

The festival proved a tough contest with over 30 participants taking part in the event that included presentation in performance, music playing and song writing.

The evaluating committee was made up of professional artists. They are Rouhi Shahin, Ismael Khader and Jamil Al Assi.

The festival was organized on the occasion of the University celebrations for the Independence Day and the Army Day.



The 16th Jerash Festival of Culture and Arts

Great artists await us

By Anca de Maio
Special to The Star

Jerash is once again upon us. It will shortly be time for the next Festival of Culture and Arts. Scheduled for 23 July, Akram Masarwah, its director said the festival will be a great event for culture and the arts.

He said the festival, which is today recognized as one of the top international venues, continues to have a cultural mission. This year's festival seeks to satisfy the cultural and artistic interests of a wider variety of people, from both Jordanians and the foreign

community in the Kingdom, he said.

"The Jerash Festival of Culture and Arts is not a local festival, but an international one", Mr Masarwah emphasized "it was conceived like this and it must stay like this", he continued "if in the past the communication between the festival and the foreign community was partial, this year we hope to draw its entire attention about the event", he pointed out.

Beside the important participation of many Jordanian and Arab artists, this summer's program offers a rich and diverse palette of international contributions, ranging from Romanian, Greek, Caucasian and Chilean

folklore groups to Russian ballet, Spanish flamenco, Algerian opera, Japanese dance and Elizabethan theatre tropes. Although many of them might seem too "sophisticated" to a recent part of the Jordanian public, they do address all categories of the public, high-school and university students included. Mr Masarwah underlined.

Not only entertaining, this summer's program ambitiously brings together popular as well as elevated manifestations of the seven arts. Accommodating up to 5000 persons, the South Theatre is reserved to modern and traditional Arabic music. Such famous singers will be present as Wa'el Kfoury (Lebanon), Asil Hallani (Lebanon), Hani Shaker (Egypt), Abdul Majid Abdallah (Saudi Arabian) and Nawal Zughbi (Lebanon). On the same stage Iraqi and Circassian traditional dances will be performed by folklore groups.

After almost 2000 years of disuse, the North Theatre will be reopened on 24 July, announced Jeryes Samawi, deputy director general of the Jerash Festival. "The romantic gesture of restoring the amphitheater to its original function represents an important moment in the history of the place as well as of our festival," Mr Samawi said. On its stage, "The Sleeping Beauty" ballet will be interpreted by the Russian "OMSK" troupe, the Romanian folklore group, "Junii Brasovului" and the Chilean group, "Bafuchi" will dance their traditional dances, and a fashion parade by Hana Sadeq will be presented.

Insisting on the initial concept of a cultural festival, this year's program will give the public the chance to compare different cultural styles of classical music interpretation or theatre performance, pointed out Kefah Fakhouri, the director of the National Music Conservatory, a collaborator in the festival since 1986.

"For the last three years we have intended to promote the classical music part in the programs. We hope that the choice offered this year by classical orchestras from Poland, Canada, Great Britain and our National Music Conservatory will have a positive impact on



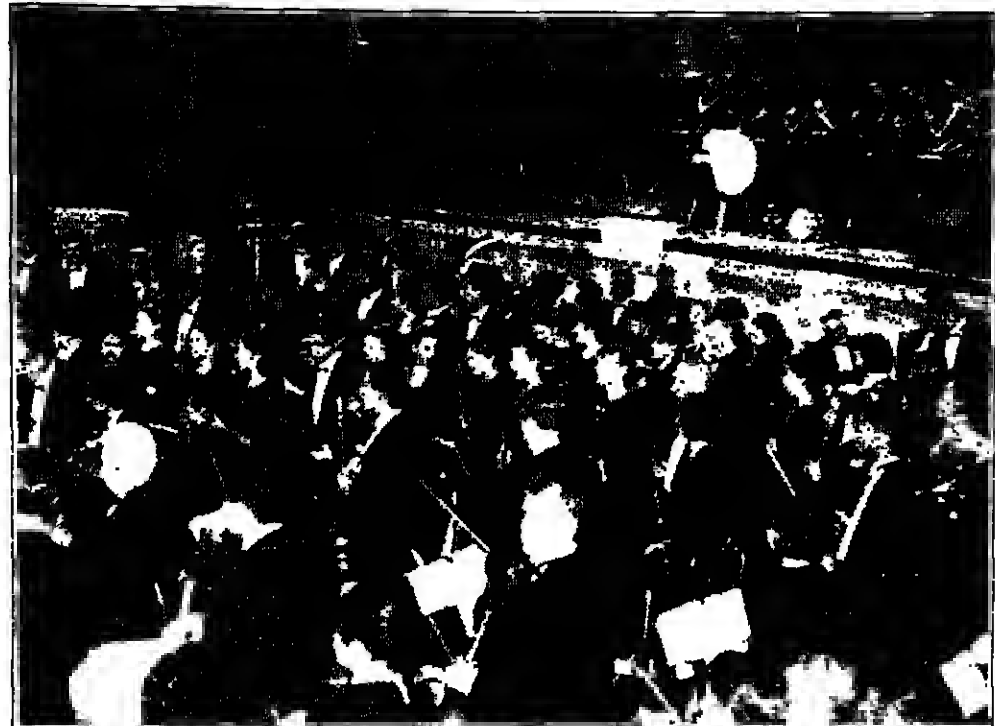
Abdul Majid Abdallah

music appreciation in Jordan and consequently on the qualitative level of the students of the Conservatory", Mr Fakhouri added. He also said that, on the Artemis Theater, the audience will be given the opportunity to compare the interpretations of Shakespeare's "Midnight Summer Dream" and "Much Ado About Nothing" by a British and an American troupe, respectively.

The poetry festival will open in the Artemis Theater too, but the criticism seminars will be held at Darat al Funun in Amman. The Zeus Vault will host "the first meeting of Arab sculptors" as well as a sculpture exhibition.

An important part of the program is represented as always by the Children's Festival "Jordanian Talents". The children will enter the wonderland of music, poetry and drama, either as actors or members of the public in the Gareia Theatre.

During the 19 days of the festival, a permanent handicrafts exhibition will be displayed along the Colonnade. ■



Controversy of film director lives on

HE EVENTUALLY won it. The internationally known Egyptian director, Youssef Shahin said that "I have been waiting for this prize for the last 47 years." Shahin was awarded the Golden Jubilee Prize for his latest film *Al Masir* in recognition of his latest film *Al Masir*.

Head of the Panel of Judges French actress

Isabelle Adjani said that the members of the panel were unanimous in awarding Shahin the prize. She added that the director has insight which should be deeply appreciated.

Al Masir is a story about the life of the great Arab philosopher Ibn Rushd in 12th century. Ibn Rushd was a deep thinker who lived in Cordoba in the palace of Caliph Mansour. A fundamentalist group tried to overthrow the Caliph at that time. The fundamentalists were burning Ibn Rushd's books and in fact stabbed his poet friend.

According to the film the Caliph had two sons: One followed the teachings of Ibn Rushd while the other was devoted to music and dance with the gypsies. However, the fundamentalists were able to convert him to their cause.

Al Masir, which is a joint Egyptian-French production, was filmed in different locations in Egypt, Syria, Lebanon and France. Screen giant Egyptian actor, Noor Al Sharif, played the principal character of Ibn Rushd. Laila Al Alawi, Mahmood Hameida, Wasifya

Al Omari, and Khalid Al Nabawi were also leading members of the cast.

Shahin said he chose the life of Ibn Rushd because the character was a leading fighter for the freedom of thought since the 12th century. In a clear reference to Egypt and the Arab world, he said that this film calls for the struggle against fundamentalism and terrorism on free expression.

Shahin is regarded as one of the fathers of modern Arabic cinema. During his career that spans over 50 years, he directed many films that proved highly controversial for the issues they tackle. He tried to talk about problems and dilemmas that not only affects Egypt but the common Arab man.

As evidenced by his latest films, he is never



Shahin holds the coveted prize in jubilation

afraid to speak out on issues that affect the well being of society. Freedom of thought and expression is fundamental, and this is what Shahin has tried to point out. ■



Noor Al Sharif in a scene from *Al Masir*

French TV program brings Jordan into limelight

AMMAN (Star) — A 15-hour French television series, *Le Jour de la Victoire*, is about to be broadcast in Jordan. The series, which is produced by France 2 (Paris), will be shown on 13 June, the day after the anniversary of Hussein's visit to Paris.

The crew, who have been shooting in Jordan for some time, is focusing on different aspects of Jordanian society. They have, for instance, filmed different towns and archaeological sites including the West Bank desert.

In addition, the team has filmed the growing women's movement, women at home and the most recent developments in the Jordanian business world.

The series, which comprises shooting this Friday, 6 June, visits different schools and towns and examines how Jordan's young people respond to the people of different regions. Interviews were also part of the series, examining Jordan's agricultural and water issues. With the help of the Super Fund of the Jordanian Army, the crew filmed

from air. This proved a spectacular experience.

The aim has been to be as varied as possible and to show the French viewer the rich variety of Jordanian life.

The idea behind the documentary is to promote Jordan abroad and to increase tourism from France and Europe to this particular part of the world. More and more French tourists are already making Jordan their holiday destination.

Many people are involved in the venture that is a co-production between French Television and Jordan TV. The Ministry of Tourism, the Royal Armed Forces, Royal Jordanian and the French Embassy in Amman have all been involved.

The idea came about during a meeting between Mr. Nasser Jideh, the head of Jordan TV and Mr. Gerard Sebing, the head of the project at French Television. The program is also expected to be aired on TV.

This venture is being hailed as another great opportunity for cooperation between Jordan and France. ■

Qatar Cable Vision adds another Orbit service to line-up

QATAR CABLE

Vision, the Qatar

MMDS service owned

and operated by the

Qatar Public Telecom-

munications Company

(Q-Tel), launched an

additional Orbit service

on 1 June, Orbit News,

the eighth Orbit channel

to launch on QCV, joins

Al Oula Al Thania, The

Fun Channel, The Holly-

wood Channel, America Plus, Super Movies,

and Orbit-ESPN Sports.

Orbit services were first made available on the popular television service in the fall of 1995. Since then, the Orbit services and QCV have enjoyed increasing success and demand amongst Qatari viewers.

Commenting on the launch of the new service, John Aslett, Orbit direct general manager of distribution for the Gulf, said: "In our continuing expansion in the Gulf region, Qatar has proven an important market for us. Thanks to our agreement with QCV, a growing number of Orbit services are reaching a growing number of viewers. The addition of Orbit news attests to strong demand for our



quality programming."

Mr Qasem Al Emadi,

general manager of QCV,

commented: "The Orbit

services offer quality pro-

gramming for the entire

family, and they are a sig-

nificant component of the

QCV package. In line

with our commitment to

expand our subscribers'

choice of television enter-

tainment, we are very

pleased to now add Orbit News."

The Orbit Satellite Television and radio

Network is the world's first fully digital,

multi-channel, pay-television service, pro-

viding perfect sound and picture quality at

all times. Orbit currently broadcasts a pre-

mium package of television and radio ser-

vices in Arabic, English and French to 23

territories in the Middle East and North

Africa. In addition, the Orbit platform is the

exclusive provider of the STAR SELECT

bouquet of services, broadcast exclusively

from Intelsat 703. The network also broad-

casts the free-to-air Promotional Channel

from Arabsat 2A, located at 26 degree East.

■

THE FAR SIDE

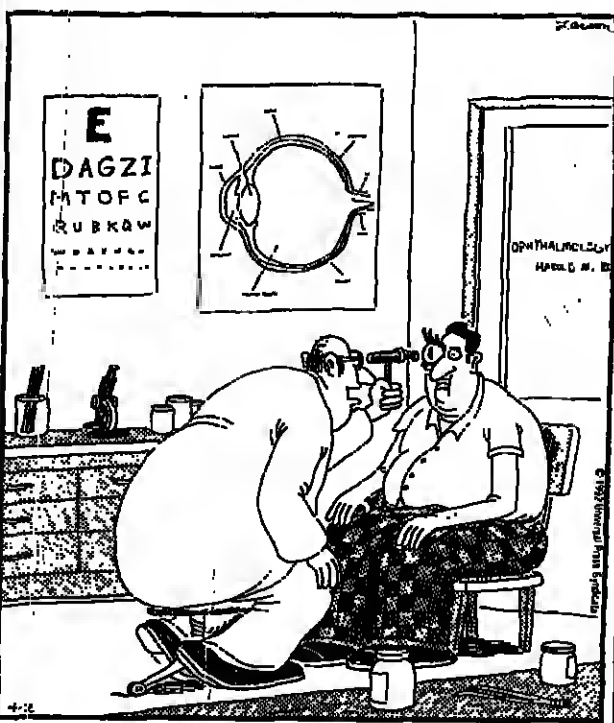
By GARY LARSON



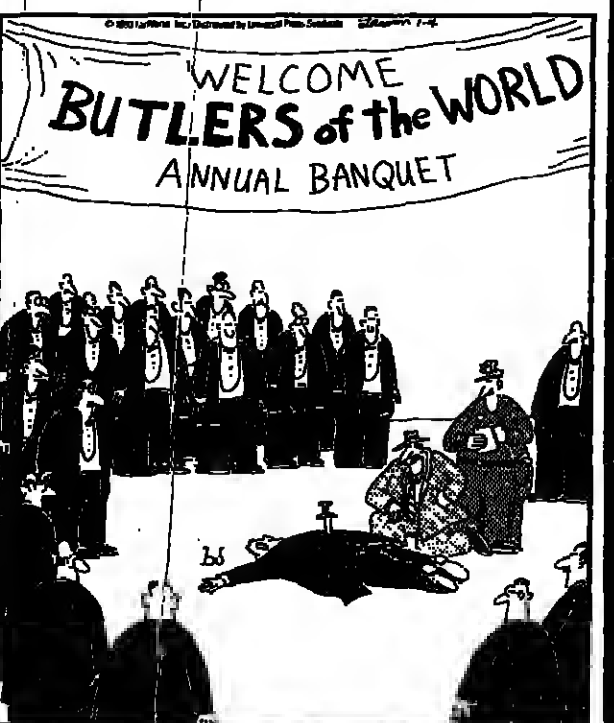
As Nyles left the safari club, his stomach suddenly knotted up. Foolishly, he had ignored the warnings not to park his Land Rover in this part of Tanzania.



While vacationing in Africa, Pinocchio has his longtime wish to be a real boy suddenly and unexpectedly granted.



"Oh, this is wonderful, Mr. Gruenfeld — I've only seen it a couple of times. You have corneal corruption. ... Evil eye, Mr. Gruenfeld, evil eye."



"God, Collings, I hate to start a Monday with a case like this."

SLAPSTIX

The most precious things in speech are pauses.

Le Jourdain

Supplément en français du Star

Israël inquiet du sort de certains Palestiniens

● Israël, qui veut enrayer la série d'assassinats de Palestiniens ayant vendu des terres à des colons, a décidé lundi de renforcer leur protection et exige de l'Autorité palestinienne qu'elle arrête les meurtriers.

«L'Autorité palestinienne doit arrêter de tuer des Arabes et agir contre les auteurs de ces meurtres», a affirmé le Premier ministre Benjamin Netanyahu (notre photo), après trois meurtres en un mois d'agents immobiliers palestiniens. Des Palestiniens ayant vendu des terres à des Israéliens s'étaient amèrement plaints ce week-end dans les médias, affirmant que le gouvernement israélien ne faisait rien pour les protéger face aux agents de la sécurité palestinienne «qui se promènent librement et en armes à Jérusalem-est». Du coup, Israël a décidé de lancer des mandats d'arrêt à l'encontre des Palestiniens soupçonnés de ces meurtres et d'élever une «ferme protestation» auprès de l'Autorité palestinienne. L'Autorité palestinienne a affirmé pour sa part qu'elle n'avait rien à voir avec ces crimes. Mais selon elle, les Palestiniens qui vendent des terres se rendent coupables de haute trahison car ils favorisent la colonisation et entravent ainsi la création d'un Etat indépendant.



Economie

Changer de mentalité

Pour espérer améliorer son économie, la Jordanie ne doit pas se reposer sur des aides ou emprunts extérieurs mais penser aux moyens lui permettant d'ouvrir son économie.

Code de la presse

Le temps joue pour la loi

Trois semaines après l'adoption d'une nouvelle loi sur la presse, les négociations entre le gouvernement et les opposants à cette loi restent au point mort. Réunis demain en assemblée générale, les journalistes doivent réfléchir au moyen de se faire entendre.

Quelle décision

prendra demain l'Assemblée générale des journalistes au sujet de la loi provisoire sur la presse et la publication adoptée par le gouvernement le 17 mai dernier. Approuvera-t-elle l'amendement à la loi proposé par la direction de la presse la semaine dernière?

Les réponses à ces questions devraient être connues dans le courant de cette semaine. Mais quelle que soit la décision, une chose est certaine: la polémique autour de cette loi est loin d'être terminée. Lundi dernier, les partis de l'opposition jordanienne ont réaffirmé leur volonté de poursuivre la lutte contre une loi qui constitue une grave menace à l'encontre des libertés publiques dans le pays.

Au début de la semaine dernière, les présidents d'associations (écrivains, avocats, dentistes) insistent au cours d'une réunion sur les conséquences très répressives de cette loi sur la liberté d'expression.

Deux organisations des droits de l'Homme, l'association jordanienne des droits de l'Homme et l'organisation arabe des droits de l'Homme, ont appelé le gouvernement à abandonner cette loi qualifiée d'«anti-constitutionnelle». De son côté, l'ordre des avocats semble être sur le point de demander à la Cour suprême de Justice de statuer sur la constitutionnalité de cette loi.

Mais ces démarches ne paraissent cependant pas influencer la position du gouvernement qui prône le dialogue, et particulièrement avec le Syndicat des journalistes jordanien (SJJ), tout en restant ferme sur le fond. Lors d'une réunion entre les deux parties, le gouvernement a rejeté les propositions d'amendement faites par une délégation de journalistes. Cette délégation demandait la tenue d'une session extraordinaire de

la chambre des députés pour examiner cette loi, ou bien sa suspension jusqu'à l'élection de la nouvelle chambre des députés. Le Premier ministre jordanien Abdel Salem Majali s'est ensuite adressé au président du SJJ, M. Seif El-Shenif, en lui demandant de lui communiquer une liste d'amendements souhaités.

Publiée dans la presse, cette liste a suscité le mécontentement de nombreux journalistes car elle ne touche pas le fond de cette loi, mais uniquement sa forme. Ainsi, le SJJ demande l'augmentation du capital de départ pour la création d'un quotidien à 1 million de dinars, alors que le nouveau code de la presse a fixé ce montant à 600 000 dinars. Par contre, il souhaite que le capital nécessaire au lancement d'un hebdomadaire ne dépasse pas 100 000 dinars, alors que le gouvernement exige désormais 300 000 dinars. Auparavant, 15 000 dinars étaient suffisants pour obtenir l'autorisation de publier un hebdomadaire. C'est justement cette presse hebdomadaire, jugée peu crédible et trop dérangeante, que le gouvernement souhaite voir disparaître par le biais de cette loi.

D'autres modifications proposées concernent elles le statut des journalistes. Ainsi, pour le SJJ, est journaliste celui qui est affilié au syndicat, peut importe son expérience. Enfin, le SJJ a demandé au gouvernement de vendre une partie des actions qu'il possède dans les deux plus grands quotidiens, Al Doustour et Al Ra'i, afin que sa participation devienne minoritaire.

Si ces modifications sont certaines importantes, elles ne s'attaquent pas à l'esprit même de cette loi. Maintien du grand nombre des interdits contenus dans l'article 40 (voir encadré) ainsi que les autres entraves morales et financières ne peut qu'entraîner une restriction de



Les journalistes jordanien doivent se réunir demain pour tenter de trouver une issue à la crise actuelle.

la liberté d'expression. Cette liste de modifications pluri «molles» présentée par le SJJ crée aujourd'hui un dilemme au sein des syndicats professionnels. Comment en effet les présidents de certains syndicats qui ont démissionné par solidarité peuvent-ils justifier leur décision si l'essentiel de la loi est accepté par le principal concerné, le SJJ, qui, de

surcroît, n'a pas présenté sa démission?

Il est certain que les faux pas des opposants à cette loi ont offert une chance supplémentaire au gouvernement de marquer des points dans ce conflit dont l'issue sera cruciale pour la préservation de la liberté d'expression en Jordanie.

Suleiman Sweiss

Un article 40 répressif

L'article 40 interdit la publication d'informations, d'opinions, d'analyses, de photos ou de caricatures sur tout sujet offensant le roi et la famille royale, les juges, les fonctionnaires jordanien, les autorités militaires, les forces armées jordanien, les ministères, les services de sécurité, les forces de police, les forces de gendarmerie, les forces de sécurité nationale, les forces de sécurité intérieure, les forces de sécurité extérieure, les forces de sécurité maritime, les forces de sécurité aérienne, les forces de sécurité terrestre, les forces de sécurité navale, les forces de sécurité spatiale, les forces de sécurité cybernétique, les forces de sécurité informatique, les forces de sécurité télécommunication, les forces de sécurité électronique, les forces de sécurité acoustique, les forces de sécurité olfactive, les forces de sécurité gustative, les forces de sécurité tactile, les forces de sécurité visuelle, les forces de sécurité auditive, les forces de sécurité olfactive, les forces de sécurité gustative, les forces de sécurité tactile, les forces de sécurité visuelle, les forces de sécurité auditive.

Exposition

Sur les traces de Guy Ferrer

Né en 1955 à Alger, Guy Ferrer expose depuis une dizaine d'années ses œuvres dans le monde entier. Il présente à Amman une vingtaine de tableaux et de sculptures s'intéressant à la valeur de la trace dans l'œuvre d'un artiste.

Si elle devait porter

un nom, l'exposition du peintre français Guy Ferrer présentée actuellement au Centre culturel français s'intitulerait *Signes et traces*. Représentatives de son plus récent travail, les vingt peintures sur papier et toile traquent d'une manière variée, mais cohérente, deux idées majeures de son œuvre: la trace et l'absence.

Engagé depuis des années dans une permanente «recherche de compréhension de la vie», Guy Ferrer s'interroge sur l'existence humaine dans le temps et l'espace en s'exprimant dans plusieurs domaines complémentaires: la peinture, la sculpture, ainsi que la gravure et la poésie. «Tout en appartenant à son temps, l'artiste parvient à s'émanciper de la mémoire du quotidien et à rejoindre, dans sa démarche introspective, une dimension im-

mémoriale», explique Guy Ferrer.

L'intérêt qu'il porte aux signes écrits se traduit dans une sémantique très personnelle, leur sens étant à peine suggéré. Dans *Coder*, l'immense toile suspendue sur un mur en face de la salle d'exposition, on découvre une importante allégorie du passage sur un motif de damier. Sur des carrés noirs et blancs, des silhouettes élanées, discrètes et hésitantes, se trouvent prises dans le tournoiement d'une chorégraphie rituelle. «Les personnages sont suggérés. Ce sont des signes d'écriture plutôt que des personnages», commente parcimonieusement l'artiste. Il ne faut pas rechercher une clé de lecture. Le rythme est plus important que la musique, et l'illisibilité du signe compte plus que le sens du texte.

Les personnages de Guy Ferrer se posent des questions,

mais sont tous incapables d'y répondre. Leurs esprits sont comme inscrits, indéchiffrables, dans la paume de leurs mains. Les yeux bandés ou les mains ligotées dans le dos, ils vivent leur solitude dans le «généflexion», en essayant de se rappeler les mots d'une prière oubliée. En se levant, les silhouettes s'allongent en forme de «poignard de la mort» ou de croix. Errant dans un espace infini, elles ne parviennent pas à communiquer, et même en couple, leur mariage reste formel.

Le haut du corps est toujours plus accentué que le bas, qui est d'ailleurs parfois complètement éliminé. Les «jardins», personnages-bustes en forme d'amphore, représentent peut-être l'image la plus représentative des œuvres de Ferrer présentées à Amman. Céréal et agnostique, l'homme ne cesse de s'interroger. Réduit encore plus, sa tête sans tronc est un indice de rationalité.

En général, le dessin est simple, allant à l'essentiel, sur le matériel préféré de l'artiste, le papier blanc. «J'aime à la fois sa fragilité et sa force», confesse-t-il. L'effet de relief créé par des jeux d'expérimentation et des combinaisons de techniques (zinc, pierre, or, huile) met en valeur la sensualité de la texture et la spiritualité du contraste entre le doré et le noir. «Je travaille sur le principe des contrastes et je construis des contrastes en utilisant la couleur

des dieux, l'or, et la couleur de l'absence, le noir».

Autodidacte et admirateur des silhouettes de Giacometti et des grands espaces de Francis Bacon, Guy Ferrer surprend en alternant la technique des contrastes multiples avec celle du détail significatif.

C'est par la trace uniquement qu'un artiste peut se garder de l'anonymat et de la mortalité propres à la nature humaine. Mais la trace, c'est aussi le geste primitif qui consiste à poser la main enduite de terre colorée sur une roche, que même les enfants reproduisent instinctivement. «Parfois, l'artiste doit faire preuve d'une grande modestie et se contenter d'être un artisan», explique Guy Ferrer, car il arrive que le hasard ou l'arbitraire le privent temporairement de l'inspiration et l'obligent à entamer un long processus d'élaboration.

Anca de Maio

C'est la vie

L'agenda français d'Amman

Cinéma

Cycle consacré au réalisateur Claude Santet. Le 9 juin à 20h30 au CCCL, César et Rosalie (1972).

Exposition

L'artiste Guy Ferrer présente ses œuvres (sculptures et tableaux) au CCCL jusqu'au 19 juin 1997.



Les enfants restent les premières victimes de l'embargo.

Humanitaire

Au chevet des enfants irakiens

Alors que le nombre de victimes ne cesse d'augmenter en Irak, des associations se battent pour essayer d'aider les plus touchés par l'embargo, à savoir les enfants.

En déclarant

cette semaine que 30 000 enfants irakiens étaient morts au cours des six derniers mois, le ministre irakien du Commerce a rappelé que les enfants restent les premières victimes de l'embargo qui frappe l'Irak depuis maintenant six années.

Sur place, certaines associations humanitaires se battent pour préserver la survie de ces enfants en leur procurant de l'assistance. C'est le cas d'Enfants du Monde-Droits de l'Homme (EMDH), une association créée en 1986 à Paris, qui est présente en Asie du Sud-Est, en Afrique, au Moyen-Orient et en Amérique du Sud.

Après le cessez-le-feu de 1991, l'association a envoyé des délégations en Irak afin d'évaluer les conséquences de la guerre, puis celles des sanctions imposées par l'ONU. «Suite au conflit, l'Irak était ébranlé et l'embargo affectait

la santé des enfants. EMDH a alors concocté un programme d'urgence», explique Anna Gades, représentante d'EMDH en Irak. «Le programme comprenait de l'aide alimentaire pour des familles de Bagdad et de Mossoul, ainsi que de l'aide médicale. Nous avons alors également mis en place une école d'apprentissage professionnelle à Bagdad».

Dans ses statuts, cette association s'est en effet donnée pour mission «la défense du droit de tous les enfants à être protégés, soignés, nourris, éduqués et à avoir un avenir, quelles que soient leur origine et leur culture». Dans le cadre de cette mission, les représentants d'EMDH sont donc amenés à construire des locaux de rattrapage scolaire et de formation professionnelle. Grâce à l'appui de la Fondation Air-

France, EMDH a alors initié un nouveau projet pour les enfants d'Irak. «Le projet actuel est destiné à aider 18 000 élèves dans 23 écoles. L'association, en coopération avec la Croix rouge irakienne, va distribuer à la rentrée scolaire prochaine du matériel scolaire», explique Anna Gades.

D'autres projets sont actuellement à l'étude pour aider les enfants, et notamment des structures d'accueil pour les handicapés. Mais les envois de vivres et de médicaments restent prioritaires. «L'association a dénoncé l'injustice de cet embargo qui touche en premier lieu les enfants», explique Anna Gades. «Et c'est pourquoi nous devons absolument aider les enfants à dépasser leurs souffrances».

Nahed Al Khloof

L'association des Diplômés des Nations de France organise aujourd'hui à 17h00 une réception à l'occasion de la fête de l'Indépendance et de l'Armée. Pour tout renseignement, tel: 702334

SELON

Quel sera le profil

du prochain parlement? Telle est la question que se pose actuellement l'élite politique jordanienne.

A cinq mois des élections législatives, cette question ne peut avoir un sens qu'en fonction des deux données suivantes. Premièrement, le renouveau de certaines personnalités politiques de premier rang, telles que Taher Masri ou Karim Abdel Kabarti, deux anciens Premiers ministres, à se présenter aux élections.

Et deuxièmement, la séparation annoncée des fonctions de député et de ministre, ce qui ne va pas motiver la candidature de ceux pour qui l'obtention d'un portefeuille au sein du gouvernement est une priorité.

Mais le visage de cette nouvelle chambre ne devrait pas être complètement modifié en raison du maintien du même mode de scrutin qu'en 1993. Par contre, son action peut être différente.

Une certaine tendance pousse en effet à juger l'action parlementaire indépendante de la conjonction politique interne ou des contraintes régionales ou internationales. C'est notamment pour cette raison que le parlement de 1989 conserve une bonne image, car il avait adopté les lois initiales du processus démocratique, notamment sur les partis politiques et la presse. Or, ces deux projets de loi faisaient partie du programme gouvernemental de l'époque et traduisaient les orientations en la matière de la Charte nationale. En revanche, la chambre de 1993 garde aux yeux de certains une mauvaise image pour avoir ratifié le traité de paix jordanien-israélien.

Le profil de la nouvelle assemblée dépend aussi bien sûr des conditions générales dans lesquelles les élections législatives se déroulent. Celles-ci vont intervenir à un moment où la situation économique n'est pas très bonne pour le royaume hachémite. Et sur le plan politique, la limitation des libertés publiques et l'impassable actuelle du processus de paix sont susceptibles de créer un climat favorable pour la progression des forces de l'opposition, ainsi que pour les personnalités politiques indépendantes qui ont une position critique à l'égard de l'action du gouvernement. Et l'apparition de nouvelles alliances politiques, dont le Parti national constitutionnel, peut, elle aussi, modifier le visage de cette chambre.

Ce qui est certain, c'est que cette nouvelle assemblée aura l'opportunité de jouer d'une plus grande institutionnalisation de son action, grâce notamment à une meilleure organisation des blocs parlementaires qui sera facilitée par la séparation des fonctions de Premier ministre et de député.

Hussein Abn-Rumman

Le Jourdain, on y revient. Tous les jeudis dans le Star 645 380



Guy Ferrer présentant ses œuvres au Centre culturel français

هكذا من الشرح

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American Centre Library	820101	Plaza Cinema	699238
British Council	636147/8	Philadelphia Cinema	634144
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